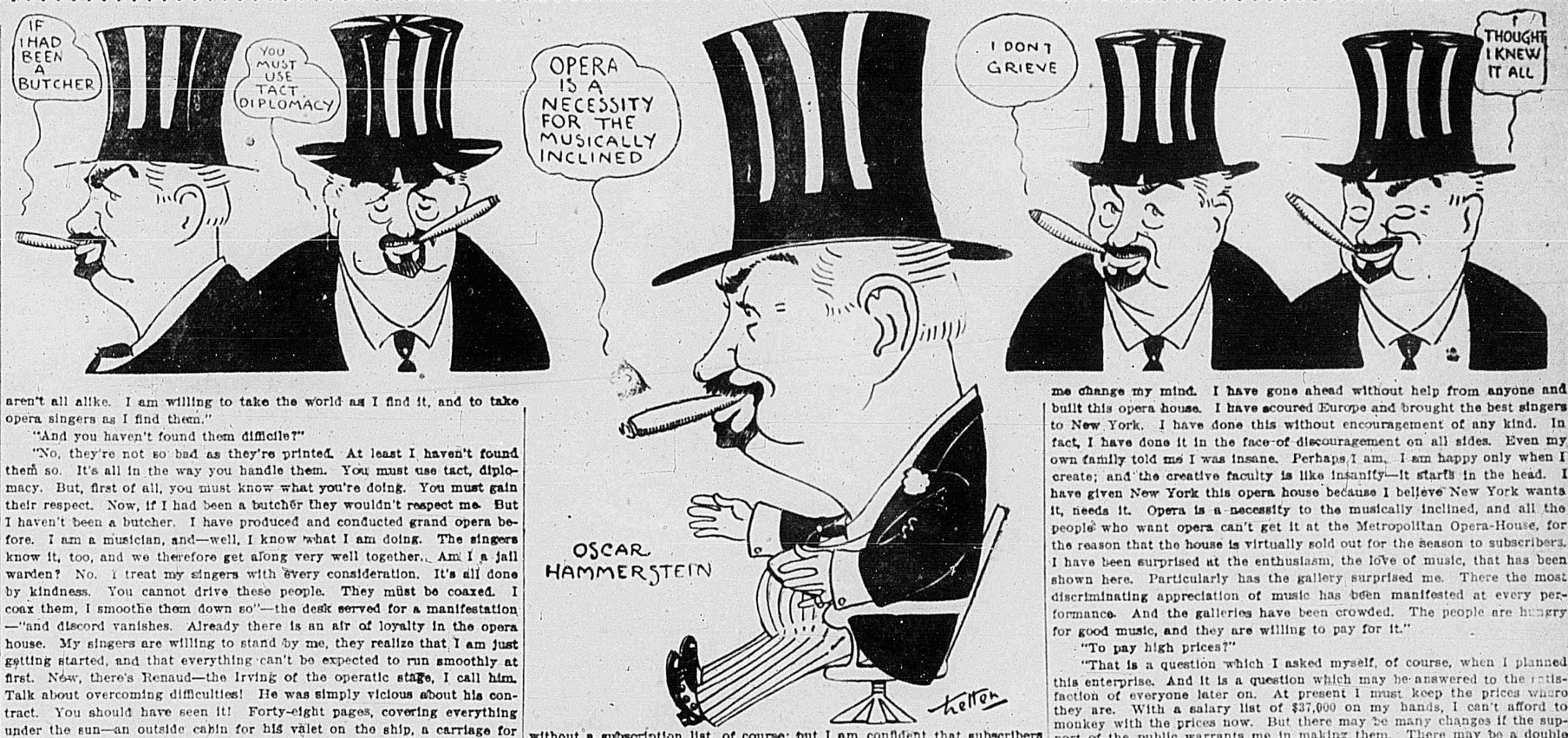
OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN Believes He Was Born for Grand Opera.

By Charles Darnton

New Impresario Happy Only When He Is Creative—Gets Loyal Support from His Company and Is Satisfied with That Given Him by the Public—Hints at the Possibility of a Double Organization, with Every-Night Opera and Lower Prices, and He Isn't Talking Through His New Hat.



IT was as serene as a riot.

"It's just like Europe, isn't it?" remarked my French accomplice, Mr. Ketten, expanding and beginning to feel at home.

Yes, it was like a row between a Paris cabman, accompanied by the departure of an imitation train from St. Lazare station. The air was filled with "forrin" words and imported gestures. All were hurled at Oscar the Great, Hammerstein the Master Builder, as he hurried through the long lobby of the Manhattan Opera-House, pursued by a horde of eager, excited gentlemen with pointed beards and remarks to match. A football expert might have described the moving picture as a "mass play." A statuesque lady in operatic furs tried to tackle the redoubtable Oscar from the side line, but missed him by a boa's length. The goal was the Herr Direktor's private office at the eastern end of the lobby, and he escaped through the door by the rim of his hat. There was no stopping him.

I expected to find this man of large and strenuous affairs a bit ruffled. But, no, he was as smooth as his silk hat, built on the old Hammerstein plan but as new as his opera-house.

"Do you find it harder to be a grand-opera impresario than a theatrical manager?" I inquired, when we found ourselves within the freshly kalsomined walls of his retreat.

"I will tell you," he said, giving his big, black cigar a moment's rest. "As a theatrical manager I was in purgatory, and now I am in ——."

No, he didn't say what you're anticipating.

"And I won't say heaven," he continued, as he thought it over with his cigar. "Perhaps I should say that I am in my element. Yes, that is it. My life as a theatrical manager has been one of worry and vexation. I have found very little pleasure in it. But to produce opera, to have my own opera-house—that is different. I believe I was born for it. It is an experience for which I have longed many years."

"And has the experience taught you anything thus far?"

He removed the cigar to make room for an amused "Ha!"

"Taught me anything?" he repeated, leaning back in his chair and sending a cloud of smoke to the ceiling. "I should think so. You see, I thought I knew it all. And then I discovered that I didn't, that I had a lot to learn. We all discover that some time or other, you know."

Mr. Hammerstein wore his celebrated hat, but he wasn't talking through it. He hadn't taken the leap from headliners and monkeys to prima donnas and tenors without learning a thing or two, and he was frank enough to say so.

"But grand-opera singers aren't so hard to manage if you go about it in the right way," he went on. "I don't grieve when I find that people aren't all alike. I am willing to take the world as I find it, and to take opera singers as I find them."

"And you haven't found them difficile?"

"No, they're not so bad as they're printed. At least I haven't found them so. It's all in the way you handle them. You must use tact, diplomacy. But, first of all, you must know what you're doing. You must gain their respect. Now, if I had been a butcher they wouldn't respect me. But I haven't been a butcher. I have produced and conducted grand opera before. I am a musician, and—well, I know what I am doing. The singers know it, too, and we therefore get along very well together. Am I a jail warden? No. I treat my singers with every consideration. It's all done by kindness. You cannot drive these people. They must be coaxed. I coax them, I smoothe them down so"—the desk served for a manifestation—"and discord vanishes. Already there is an air of loyalty in the opera house. My singers are willing to stand by me, they realize that I am just getting started, and that everything can't be expected to run smoothly at first. Now, there's Renaud—the Irving of the operatic stage, I call him. Talk about overcoming difficulties! He was simply vicious about his contract. You should have seen it! Forty-eight pages, covering everything under the sun—an outside cabin for his valet on the ship, a carriage for him to and from rehearsals—nothing left out. Yet, when his voice wasn't in shape for his opening performance, what did he do? He came to me and told me to deduct $1,600 from his salary. And Mme. Bressler-Gianoli! When I asked her to sing Carmen on Friday and Saturday evenings of this week, what did she say? Impossible! She had never heard of such a thing! But I talked with her, gently, earnestly. And what did she say when I had finished, when I had explained the situation to her? She said she would sing at both performances, that's what she said. Tact, diplomacy, did the business. That is the kind of support I am getting from my singers."

"And what about the support of the public?"

"Come any night and see the string of people at the box-office window. That's the best answer to your question. The support of the public has been all, and even more, than I expected. I must get along for awhile without a subscription list, of course; but I am confident that subscribers will come in time. First I must establish my opera house, my singers must be known to the public at large. Now, if anyone asked 'Who's Bonci?' I might just as well say 'He's a brother of Tony, the bootblack.' And in answer to who's Gianoli?" say 'She's a sister of Levy, the cleaner.' The public must learn to know my singers. This will take time. But when the people have heard them once they will come to hear them again—of that I am certain. It is wholly a matter of singers. It is not a matter of location. The public will go anywhere if it can get what it wants. If my opera house were located at Forty-second street and Broadway and I didn't have the goods, I wouldn't get the public. You've got to deliver the goods. And I am delivering the goods. I leave the rest to the public, and I am confident of the result."

"You still believe there is room for two opera houses in New York?"

"I have believed that from the first, and nothing has happened to make me change my mind. I have gone ahead without help from anyone and built this opera house. I have scoured Europe and brought the best singers to New York. I have done this without encouragement of any kind. In fact, I have done it in the face of discouragement on all sides. Even my own family told me I was insane. Perhaps I am. I am happy only when I create; and the creative faculty is like insanity—it starts in the head. I have given New York this opera house because I believe New York wants it, needs it. Opera is a necessity to the musically inclined, and all the people who want opera can't get it at the Metropolitan Opera-House, for the reason that the house is virtually sold out for the season to subscribers. I have been surprised at the enthusiasm, the love of music, that has been shown here. Particularly has the gallery surprised me. There the most discriminating appreciation of music has been manifested at every performance. And the galleries have been crowded. The people are hungry for good music, and they are willing to pay for it."

"To pay high prices?"

"That is a question which I asked myself, of course, when I planned this enterprise. And it is a question which may be answered to the satisfaction of everyone later on. At present I must keep the prices where they are. With a salary list of $37,000 on my hands, I can't afford to monkey with the prices now. But there may be many changes if the support of the public warrants me in making them. There may be a double company, opera every night in the week, and prices that will put opera within the reach of people who may be staying away now because they cannot afford it at the present prices. I do not believe that the public's interest in the new opera house is the enthusiasm of the moment; but I am waiting to see. Then we may see many things. I should like"——

But he stopped, and the hat of Hammerstein seemed to turn into the wishing cap of Siegfried.

"Are your old friends coming over from Broadway?" I asked.

"No one is coming out of friendship," said the man who has more friends along Broadway than Roosevelt could shake a big stick at. "I have not counted on my friends helping me in this enterprise. They might come once, but if they didn't like opera they wouldn't come again. No; New York theatre-goers are not loyal. I learned that long ago. With them it is simply a matter of getting what they want. And now, what else do you want? I can't think of anything more, unless you want me to sing to you."

We fled.

Roy L. McCardell | The Evening World's | Martin Green | Three Humorists | Irvin S. Cobb

The Difference Between the Merry Yuletide and a Well-Framed Birthday.

By Roy L. McCardell.

"THIS Christmas gift system has got me going," said the Chorus Girl. "I'll be star-gazing for sure if it's kep' up much longer.

"Christmas comes but once a year, being so different from birthdays, which you can have as often as you wish, so long as you pull 'em off before a new audience.

"A birthday beats Christmas to shreds for another reason. Christmas is give as well as take, but there's a come-back when a tactful girl has a birthday without telling how old she is.

"A girl's first thought when she has a new fellow on her staff is how long must I wait with this one before I lead the subject gently up to month stones and what star one was born under? Because Wednesday next is my birthday!'

"This must be said with winsome girlishness. And only after you've studied Julia Marlowe and Maude Adams and have played ingenue in stock, like I have, can you say it without getting the guy jerry—I mean without making the gentleman suspicious.

"It would make my mother sit up and snarl if she knew I ever used such slang. Of course I don't, but the way Amy De Branscombe talks it is something fierce.

"Well, I was telling you about the birthday gag. Every time I get a new beau I have a new birthday. That's the acid test. If he don't come up as Cheerful Charley, then I know I am in on a dead one.

"And let me tell you about that. Never be hopeful they'll do better next time. Once a dead one, always a dead one.

"If a friend will do you once, he'll do you again. And that is why all girls are so apt to overestimate their birthdays and underestimate their age.

"Not that they want the presents so very much, but to find out if Willie Everdrop loves you or loves you not.

"All girls do it, and they don't give each other away about it, either. So for goodness sake don't say I told you!

"But, at that, if you are courting a new doll and she commences to ask you about what month stone is the garnet, and if you believe in being born under lucky stars, don't start when she pipes you off innocently that next Wednesday is her birthday.

"If a girl is born under a lucky star, her admirers produce in a way to make the jeweller joyful.

"If he doesn't produce, he's given some preferred stock in the Home and Consumers' Ice Company.

"Donald De Branscombe has come home for Christmas. You remember me telling you about that sweet graduate from the solitary-confinement college?

"We haven't had much trouble with him because the six-day bicycle race is just his style. And the crowd has been so large and careless that Donald De Branscombe has been self-supporting.

"Dopey McKnight has got him buffaloed. I don't know how it was Dopey got the Indian sign on him, but its been ever since Dopey and he had words and Dopey stabbed him with the piano stool.

"Maybe you didn't know it, but Dopey McKnight is just crazy about pets, only Mamma De Branscombe won't let him keep them in the flat.

"I've heard him say a hundred times that he wanted to save up his money to buy a dictionary or a gorilla, if he knew where they sold them on instalments.

"A dictionary and a gorilla! Ain't that just like Dopey? And he has no use in the world for a dictionary, but he's like everybody else, he will set his mind on useless things.

"Of course, we've got a Teddy Bear and Dopey is just daffy about it. When we take it out anywhere Dopey insists on carrying it.

"An old gent who seen him lugging it up Broadway after us the other night and who had his pots with him took Dopey for an amateur philanthropist.

"'Ah,' says the amiable old soak, 'I'm glad to see the spirit of Christmas is in you, young man; it's in me!'

"'You are going to make some one happy with yon toy,' said the boozy old boy; 'I admire you for it.'

"'Here, make 'em happy with this.' And he pulled out a blond wedge that would make you moan, and, tearing off the cover, he inflicted it on Dopey.

"It was twenty bucks, and Mamma De Branscombe wanted us to go back and get the giver, because, as she said, he might meet with some other people and get robbed.

"Say, it's a wonder she's got a son who's a rum. He doesn't steal his disposition with the rest of the things he brings home with him.

"Say, before that twenty dollars was warm in Dopey's mitt she was thinking up schemes to take it away from him, from locking him up alone and selling him a pack of cigarettes for it, to simply stabbing him with an axe if he didn't give it up quietly and no questions asked.

"I saw right away that she had set her mind on it, and her hand would follow soon.

"With Dopey McKnight, the simplest way is the easiest. I turned to him; he still had the Teddy Bear, holding it tight, and I said, 'Dopey, if you'll give me that twenty dollars I'll let you carry the Teddy Bear!'

"'You're on!' said Dopey, and slipped it to me.

"Say, Mamma De Branscombe was so mad she bit her mink boa in two. And if you think that's easy, even though agitated, try it once.

"Say, kid, when it comes to raising the dust around Christmas time, I'm the original high wind, and all others is imitations!"

Joe Miller, of Joke Book Fame, Talks About New York

By Martin Green.

HAVING discovered Joe Miller and thus stamped myself as one of our favorite humorists, it was decreed that I should join the ranks of his understudies. We are quite an army, including writers, comedians who get up their own stuff, after-dinner speakers and managers of the various rapid-transit systems that keep New Yorkers healthy by making them walk.

"Sooner or later," said Joe in an interview at one of his offices, "they all have to get in line. Our national motto is, 'GET THE COIN.' The way to get the coin is to shoot the con. Hand out the salve. Never overlook that everybody is a sucker but you. Never make a stagger until you know where you are going to get off. If you get in wrong, make somebody else the goat.

"Your name for the public should be Patsy Bolivar. Whenever you hear that opportunity knocks at every man's door bear in mind that in a majority of cases opportunity wears boxing gloves when it knocks. In the remaining few instances it uses an axe. To achieve success you require 70 per cent. gall, 10 per cent. pull, 10 per cent. desire to work hard and 10 per cent. ability to make others do your work.

"When I dished out the immortal work that has spread my fame all over the world, namely Joe Miller's Joke Book, I copped all my ideas. To all who are trying to keep in line with the national motto I would give this advice. Swipe everything you see that you can use. Originality is a foolish asset. Look at our great inventors. Those who are not born with some of the instincts of a pawnbroker or a corporation attorney generally reach their finish on the inside, looking out at the scenery surrounding a poorhouse.

"Many a promising career has been crabbed at the start by a too robust conception of the rights of others. The man who manifests a disposition to turn the other cheek will be kept busy turning it. Do you recall that line in 'Sis Hopkins,' 'Never do nothin' for nobody that won't do nothin' for you?' I wrote that. It got the biggest laugh in the show. Why? Because people in general feel that way.

"You must excuse me. I've got to lam. President Roosevelt is preparing a special message to Congress, and I'm needed in Washington. They had me on the jump for a few days during the session of the Civic Federation here. That stunt of millionaires advocating the confiscation by the Government of everybody's millions but their own was one of the best I ever did. District-Attorney Jerome's crusade against the pool-rooms isn't so punk either. But the thing I class as my one best bet at this writing is the Democratic State Committee putting rollers under Pat McCarren."

"But, you know," I ventured, as Joe hurried away, "that this kind of stuff has to wind up with a snapper."

"Oh, very well," he replied. "Never do anything that somebody else hasn't done, and do it worse."

T. S. Cobb

DEAR GREEN — There are several things that reconcile me to Christmas. One is that it comes but once a year; another is that after it has come we won't be finding any more of those XXX-staple-brand-for-family-use Christmas stories in the magazines for about ten or eleven blessed months.

Still, on the whole, I guess I haven't got such a grudge against the Christmas magazine stories. I know most of them by heart, and it's a good deal like meeting old friends when they bob up every December, just as regular as renewing a note.

The first Christmas magazine story out of the box is usually the one about the wicked old plutocrat, with one leg in the grave, who starts for his club on the wintry Christmas Eve, and just as he gets to the door he sees his poor, underpaid clerk still pegging away at the day-book, and a sudden tenderness comes over him and an impulse to do good wells up from his long-frozen heart, etc, etc., etc. This one is thought by some to have originated with Charles Dickens, but I have reasons to believe that it dates back to Noah, and maybe further back than that.

Nix, nix on the sudden thaw among the frozen works of the cruel plutocrat in this day and generation. In these bright Standard Oil times the cruel plutocrat doesn't give his Prisoners of Chillon anything, unless it's a month lay-off without salary. Any time he begins to write Christmas checks for the bookkeeper you may confidently expect to hear next that they are giving him the needle test for reflexes down at Bellevue and a trustee is going to be appointed for the estate.

It has been my observation that the wealthy old gentleman with one leg in the grave likes to put the other one out of the cab window on Christmas Eve.

Then there's the veteran which no self-respecting magazine overlooks—the story about the chorus girl butterfly of Broadway, who sits amid the gladsome throng, the gayest of the gay, but is overtaken with remorse just as the bells ring out the Christmas morn. You remember that one, of course? There is something about the waiter's turn-down collar that reminds her of the one her dear old dad used to wear when he went to a funeral or had his picture taken, and the thronging memories of the old life on the farm rise up before her violet eyes, and she leaves her careless companions and steals away in the storm alone. Fine, very fine?

But if the gay butterfly person is miserable on Christmas Eve, just as soon as she has found somebody who is willing to buy copiously she certainly has fine control over herself, because you never would suspect it from her manner and general conversation.

Also, we mustn't overlook the one about the prodigal son who makes a fortune in the Klondike and comes home on Christmas Day, just as the old-folks are about to be dispossessed from their humble cot, and pays off the mortgage and hands out large checks and wears a furry coat. But as for me, I don't believe in furries.

Experience should teach us that when a prodigal son makes a pile in the Klondike he doesn't hike for home. He hastens right on here to God's country—only the premises have been sublet by the original owner—and begins to look around and see if any of the original Florodora sextet are still in the market.

But my favorite of them all is the one that deals with the train that gets providentially snowbound on Christmas Day, passengers grumpy, little children weeping, conductor with a disposition like an exposed nerve—very touching spectacle. And then up rises the jolly drummer, who produces presents for the children and tells a merry story that puts everybody in a good humor, and has the ingredients for an eggnogg right there in his grip. Lovely, isn't it?—in the book.

But I'm the member who has taken that degree. Once I got snowbound on a train Christmas Day. We had the drummer right there, too, but he was one of those intellectual giants of the travelling profession who spend their spare time practising a scroll signature in the hope that some day they can write

Hi Glasses to Green Glasses, His Brother at Funny Glasses, Va.

By Irvin S. Cobb.

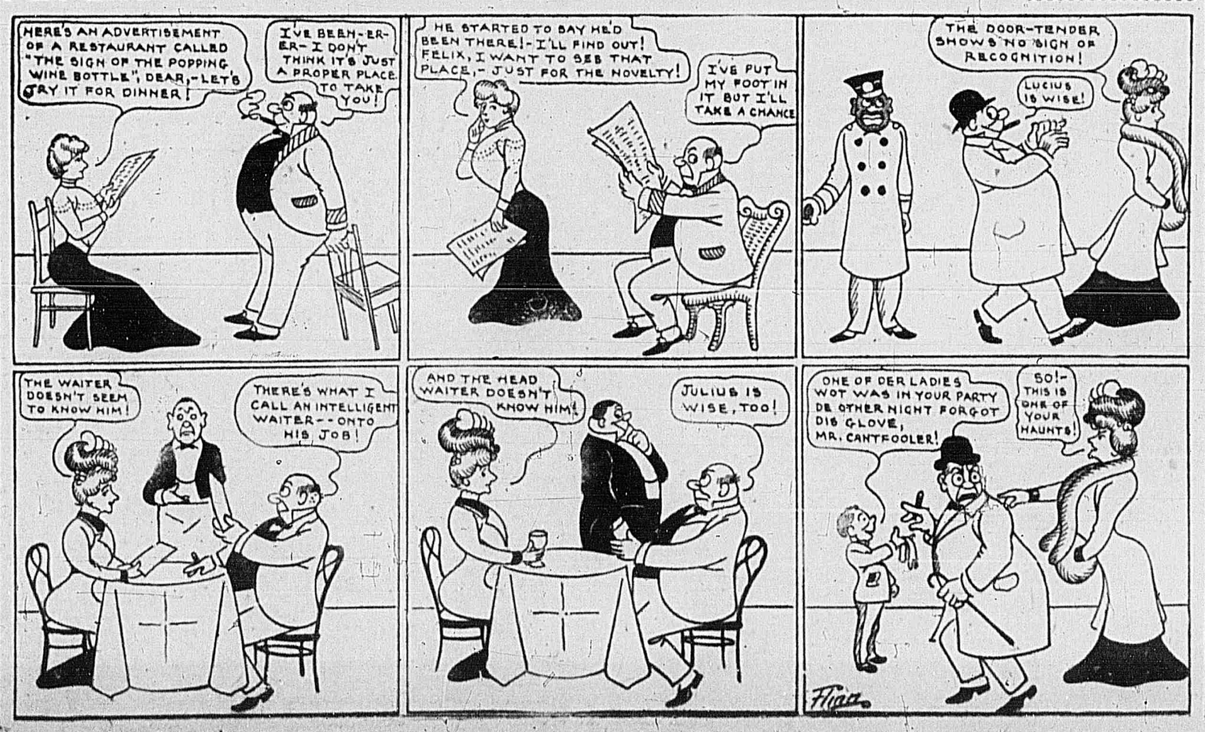
a name in the hotel register that the clerk won't be able to read, and then die happy. He didn't have any suitable presents in his valise either, unless you chanced to be a steam laundry and wanted a few soiled shirts for a Christmas gift. But he did have a bottle, and he got it out just the same as the drummer did in the story. It was a bottle of that squirrel whiskey—the kind they use to take off warts with in Peoria, where they make it. One of the passengers took a swallow out of it and was instantly wrapped in blue flames, and the brakeman licked the cork and it gave him spinal meningitis. And when he got through telling his merry story we lynched our drummer friend with the bell-cord.

Well, good-by, Green. Don't forget to hang up your stocking. Your brother, IRV.

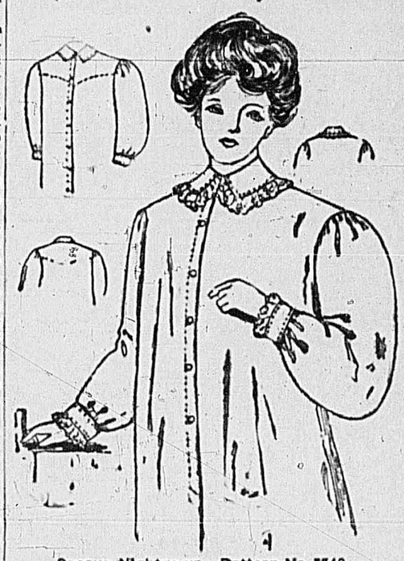
P. S.—On second thought, hang up the landlord, too.

Mr. and Mrs. Cantfooler.

By E. F. Flinn



May Manton's Daily Fashions.



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Pattern No. 5540 is cut in sizes for a 34, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44 and 46 inch bust measure.

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